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SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEF AND PRACTICE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

By EDMUND S. CONKLIN of the University of Oregon

That superstitious beliefs and habits of superstitious practice are common among later adolescents, even among college students, has long been a matter of common observation and occasional comment. But so far as the writer has been able to discover, systematic studies of such beliefs and practices have been few. Of these the best is Dresslar's (1, 2). He asked 875 normal school students in California to name all the superstitions they could recall and to indicate with each their attitude toward it in the terms, no belief, partial belief, and full belief. Of these students a large majority were women. Dresslar estimates, but does not know exactly, that 80% were women. Peters (3) has more recently published a fragmentary report of a four years' study of the superstitions of 350 later adolescent girls. She presents some interesting lists of the superstitions found but no statistical treatment of the entire study. Thus far the information obtainable seems to be confined almost entirely to one sex.

As a method of obtaining a census of superstitions, Dresslar's seems admirable and his classification of the results is most helpful; but his method did not permit any determination of individual differences. Consequently his results are in terms of the number of superstitions reported, the number believed, the number disbelieved, etc. It seemed desirable therefore that another study should be made which would permit a comparison of the sexes and a statistical treatment for individual differences.

The following is the report of such a study based upon the returns to a questionnaire presented each year for four years (1913-1917) to the students beginning psychology at the University of Oregon. The questions were presented without warning, at no regular time in the year, and without suggesting that the experiment would ever be repeated. The answers were written at once without collaboration under the direction and observation of the instructor. A few, not over seventy-five altogether, were obtained by advanced students from other students of their acquaintance; but these advanced students

had already answered the questionnaire themselves and were carefully instructed concerning its use. No time was allowed for searching recall, so that the returns indicate only that which had made sufficient impression upon the individual to be easily recalled. The group thus studied was homogeneously American. Students of foreign-born parents were few and students of foreign birth rare. They came as a rule from homes of moderate to considerable culture, identified chiefly with commercial, agricultural or professional pursuits. Very few had experienced the influence of factory towns and factory life.

The questionnaire was brief and designed to be definite and explicit upon a few topics rather than comprehensive. It was worded as follows:

It is the purpose of the following to determine the frequency of superstitions in belief and practice among young people. The following are examples of what are known to exist to some extent: Luck from four leaf clover, knocking on wood, opening an umbrella in the house, number 13, Friday an unlucky day, sleeping on wedding cake, dreams being significant, fortune telling, unlucky to cross guns or bats, hoodoos of many sorts, etc.

Your sincere effort to answer the following questions accurately will be appreciated.

Negative answers, if true, are just as valuable as positive. Write answers, in the space following each question.

1. Age at present.
2. Sex.
3. State briefly any superstitions which you believe or which influence your conduct.
4. State any which you formerly believed or which influenced your conduct.
5. If you formerly had such superstitions or allowed them to influence your conduct, how old were you at the time?
6. Why do you or did you believe in them or permit them to influence your conduct?
7. Remarks or further information of interest on this topic.

It may be thought that the listing of several common superstitions at the beginning of the sheet was dangerously suggestive. This was done after much consideration and some experimentation; it was done to prevent the otherwise constantly recurring request for a definition of superstition. It seemed wiser to mention a few common examples of superstition rather than to attempt a definition which might not be

readily understood and if understood might be too exclusive. The results indicate a ready understanding of what was desired and the long list of superstitions reported does not seem to indicate limitation to those given as samples. Such mention would assist somewhat in recall of belief and practice and could vitiate the figures on relative frequency only. Emphasis was placed upon the phrase "believe or which influence your conduct" because of the observed tendency to practice but to disavow belief in the superstition. Doubtless many of Dresslar's subjects practiced superstitions which they reported under "no belief." And a superstition sufficiently strong to persistently influence human conduct is worthy of consideration. Perhaps, too, the admission of practice implies a partial belief.

Five hundred and eighty returns came to the writer. Of these twenty-three were discarded, because of imperfections (age or sex omitted) or because of the age being outside of the range determined upon, 16 to 25 years. These over and under age returns were obtained through a misunderstanding from adults and high school students. The returns analyzed and here summarized then numbered 557, the authors ranging from 16 to 25 years of age. Of these 267 were male and 290 female. The age distribution is as follows:

AGE DISTRIBUTION											
Age	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Tota
Male.....	1	5	13	40	47	60	44	23	18	18	267
Female.....	8	20	25	62	64	42	32	22	12	3	290
Totals.....	9	25	38	102	111	102	76	45	30	19	557

Acquired as these were, something over a hundred a year for four years, they should be a good sampling of Western American college youth.

ANSWERS TO QUESTION NO. 3

The question concerning the superstitions at present believed or which are at present permitted to influence conduct was answered by all of the 557. The distribution of the answers was as follows, affirmative indicating present belief or practice and negative no present belief or practice:

	Male	Female	Total
Affirmative.....	106 or 40%	193 or 66.6%	299 or 53.7%
Negative.....	157 " 59%	96 " 33.1%	253 " 45.4%
Queer feeling.....	4 " 1%	1 " 0.3%	5 " 0.9%

"Queer feeling" is a phrase taken from the returns and indicates that the persons did neither believe nor practice but experienced some slight emotion or feeling when confronted by certain superstitious situations.

AGES OF THOSE ANSWERING AFFIRMATIVELY

Age	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Total
Male.....	..	..	3	14	22	19	27	11	5	5	106
Female.....	7	14	18	44	41	30	20	13	6	..	193
Totals.....	7	14	21	58	63	49	47	24	11	5	299

Comparison of this age distribution with the age distribution for the entire group indicates a close correspondence. Consequently it can be concluded that the belief and practice of the superstitions reported is characteristic of the group as a whole rather than of any particular age. That so many more of the women than of the men admit the influence of superstition corresponds to common belief but that forty per cent of the male students admit the present belief or practice of superstition is rather surprising. Later adolescence has been commonly considered, perhaps not with sufficient reason to be sure, a peculiarly rationalistic period in development; but the confession of superstitions by more than fifty-three per cent of this entire group of students indicates most emphatically that emotion and unreason still have a tremendous grip upon their lives.

ANSWERS TO QUESTION No. 4

The request for a statement of superstitions formerly believed or practiced brought affirmative answers from 399 or 72% of the entire group. The remaining 158 or 28%, here referred to as the negative group, either never had had the personal experience of a superstition so far as they could recall or could not think of a superstition which was formerly but not now adhered to. The number of those denying any present superstitious belief or practice but who admit having had such formerly is indicated by the following comparison of the answers to questions 3 and 4:

NEGATIVE REPLIES TO No. 3 GIVING AFFIRMATIVE REPLIES TO No. 4

	Neg. to No. 3	Aff. to No. 4
Male.....	161	89 or 55%
Female.....	97	69 or 71%
Total.....	258	158 or 61%

This indicates that 61% of the students who deny any superstitiousness at present admit having former experience of

superstitions. A comparison of the affirmative and negative answers to the two questions is made in the following table:

COMPARISON OF REPLIES TO QUESTIONS NO. 3 AND NO. 4

	Affirmative	Negative
Male No. 3...	106 or 40%	161 or 60%
Male No. 4...	171 or 64%	96 or 36%
Female No. 3..	193 or 67%	97 or 33%
Female No. 4..	228 or 79%	62 or 21%

In this comparison it will be noticed, if reference is made to the former tabulation of answers to No. 3, that here the "queer feeling" group has been added to the report of negative answers. This seems to the writer their proper place for purposes of comparison; but their number is so small that their omission or replacement would make a negligible difference. By adding to the affirmative answers to No. 3 those of the No. 3 negative group who answered No. 4 affirmatively, the total number of those having had any experience of superstitions will be obtained. It is indicated in the table:

TOTAL NUMBER HAVING HAD EXPERIENCE OF SUPERSTITION

Male.....	195 or 73%
Female.....	262 or 90%
Total.....	<u>457 or 82%</u>

This means that 82% of the college students here studied can immediately recall that they believe or have believed superstitions or that their conduct is influenced or has been influenced by them. How many more could recall if given more time to think and how many more would be revealed if complete records of childhood and adolescence were available no one would of course dare to conjecture. But the well known difference between immediate and delayed recall and the well established oblivescence of much of childhood and adolescent experience justifies one in thinking that the above figures would be considerably increased. Of the 82%, however, we may be certain.

The difference here between the figures for the sexes is significant. That 90% of the women and 73% of the men have had immediately recallable experience of superstition justifies the common supposition that women are more superstitious than men but certainly does not warrant the attitude of immune superiority so often assumed by the male. The table presenting the comparison of replies to questions 3 and 4 shows a marked difference between the men and the women in the ratio of affirmative replies for No. 4 to the affirmative

replies for No. 3 which probably indicates that the men give up their superstitions more readily than the women. This is in accord with the established sex differences in conservatism and willingness to believe.

Dresslar sought only present belief, but it must be obvious that many without any very recent experience of a superstition would report no belief when in reality the tendency to believe was not dead and would readily have been reported if there had been a request for superstitions formerly believed. Hence the inclusion here of the request for former beliefs. At the same time this request was expected to produce also some evidence of superstitions conspicuous in earlier years of adolescence.

ANSWERS TO QUESTION NO. 5

The question read "If you formerly had such superstitions or allowed them to influence your conduct, how old were you at the time?" Little was or could be expected from such a question. Definite answers to such a question are exceedingly difficult to give, and when given cannot be relied upon. It can merely reveal at what age these people think that their former superstitions prevailed. The answers frequently gave a range of a few years; as for instance, 12 to 14, or 13 to 15. Where this occurred in every instance the highest age given was taken for tabulation as indicating the approximate upper limit for the superstition. Of the 399 people who answered No. 4 affirmatively, 333 or 83% gave answers to this question which could be tabulated. The other 66 gave vague answers, assigned the superstition to "childhood," or gave no answer at all. These 66 are classed below as indefinite.

AGES TO WHICH FORMER SUPERSTITIONS WERE ATTRIBUTED

Ages	Total	Indefinite	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Male (No. 3 Neg.)	89	8	1	2	1	3	..	9	1	13	2	8	11	8	9	8	1	3	1
Male (No. 3 Aff.)	82	15	1	..	2	1	1	4	2	14	3	8	10	5	4	9	3	..	..
Male total.....	171	23	2	2	3	4	1	13	3	27	5	16	21	13	13	17	4	3	1
Female (No. 3 Neg.)	69	9	..	..	1	..	1	5	..	14	9	9	6	8	3	4	..	..	..
Female (No. 3 Aff.)	159	34	..	2	2	2	2	26	3	26	8	22	13	11	3	3	1	1	..
Female total.....	228	43	..	2	3	2	3	31	3	40	17	31	19	19	6	7	1	1	..
Grand total ...	399	66	2	4	6	6	4	44	6	67	22	47	40	32	19	24	5	4	1

This indicates that the years selected as being the years of greatest superstitiousness coincide with the early years of adolescence. It must be remembered, however, that this is nothing more than the present opinion of later adolescents concerning the period of their own greatest former superstitiousness. The small number attributed to the years eleven and thirteen carries probably no more significance than the general tendency of thought and speech to use the even rather than the odd numbers. The steady decline in frequency during the last years of adolescence harmonizes well with the difference in number between those reporting present and those reporting former superstitious belief or practice. But the last few years of this table are identical with the first years of the ages of the entire group studied. Comparison of the age of each person reporting with the age to which was assigned the former superstitions betrayed the fact that a few had abandoned the superstition mentioned so recently as to make the abandonment questionable. One 18 year old girl referred her superstition to the age of 17; one girl and one boy of 20 referred their superstitions to the age of 19; 2 boys of 21 referred to 20; one boy of 22 referred to 21; and one girl of 22 referred to 20. This may really indicate a recent change of belief and practice or it may indicate a hesitation to confess the truth—or it might be due to the rather clearly rationalistic attitude of mind aroused by the questionnaire. But the explanation is not clear and the number is quite small. If there is an error here in reporting these as former superstitions it would if corrected slightly increase the number of those having superstitions at present.

THE SUPERSTITIONS REPORTED

The construction of a list of the superstitions reported, each distinct from all the others, with the number of times each was mentioned proved to be a complicated and uncertain task. Many varieties of what seemed to be fundamentally the same superstition were reported and many reports were so brief as not to make clear under which variety they belonged. Examination of Dresslar's lists will reveal similar difficulties. Consequently it seemed wise to neglect the slight variations and to tabulate according to the general form. Thus for illustration in the lists below "Dreams prophetic" includes many different notions concerning the significance of dreams, "picking up pins" includes hair pins and needles, "fortune telling" includes many methods. Greater condensation could easily have been made, but the policy followed in the compila-

SUPERSTITIONS MENTIONED IN No. 3 AS BELIEVED IN OR PRACTICED AT
PRESENT

	Total		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Knocking on wood.....	92	31	20	19	72	37
Four leaf clover.....	79	26	7	7	72	37
Dreams prophetic.....	59	20	9	8	50	26
Number 13.....	38	13	21	20	17	9
Open ng umbrella in house.....	34	11	7	7	27	14
Fortune telling (cards, tea-cup, palm).....	34	11	5	5	29	15
Sleep on wedding cake.....	29	10	0	0	29	15
Black cats.....	28	9	11	10	17	9
Post coming between two walking.....	25	8	9	8	16	8
Picking up pins.....	25	8	5	5	20	10
Friday or Friday the 13th.....	20	7	5	5	15	8
Walking under a ladder.....	20	7	12	10	8	4
Breaking wish bone.....	14	5	0	0	14	7
Wishing on stars.....	13	4	0	0	13	7
Moon over shoulder, through trees, etc.....	13	4	7	7	6	3
Premonitions.....	12	4	7	7	5	3
Breaking mirror.....	9	3	1	..	8	4
Hoodooos, jinxes and charms.....	9	3	3	3	6	3
Number 3.....	9	3	4	4	5	3
Wishing on load of hay.....	6	2	0	0	6	3
Weather signs (ground hog, etc.).....	6	2	1	..	5	3
Carrying implément through house.....	6	2	4	4	2	1
Five leaf clover unlucky.....	5	2	0	0	5	3
Wish upon simultaneous remark.....	5	2	1	..	4	2
Th rd smoke l'ghted from same match.....	5	2	5	5	0	0
Spilling salt cause of quarrel.....	4	1	0	0	4	2
Sing before breakfast cry before night.....	4	1	1	..	3	2
Horseshoe.....	4	1	3	3	1	..
Dog howling at night death sign.....	3	1	0	0	3	2
Drop fork, company coming (or knife).....	3	1	1	..	2	1
Cutting finger nails on Sunday.....	3	1	1	..	2	1
Opals lucky or unlucky.....	3	1	0	0	3	2
Fear cemetery after dark.....	3	1	3	3	0	0
Removing another's r'ng breaks friendship....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Knife cuts friendship.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Bird entering house—death or bad luck.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Flipping coin for decision.....	2	..	2	2	0	0
Toe stubbed unlucky.....	2	..	2	2	0	0
Number 23.....	2	..	2	2	0	0
Good beginning bad ending.....	2	..	2	2	0	0
Lending to player in same poker game.....	2	..	2	2	0	0
Moon phase affecting vegetable growth.....	2	..	2	2	0	0
Not definitely stated.....	11	4	7	7	4	2

tion was to avoid condensation when practicable. Consequently "black cats" and "hoodoos and jinxes" may seem to overlap and probably do; but where black cats were specifically mentioned it seemed better to report the fact separately and to lump those replies which merely used the words hoodoo and jinx. No effort was made in the tabulation to distinguish between the lucky and the unlucky phenomena because the

same superstition is often reported with both significances. The numbers given after each superstition report the number of people answering that question who mentioned that superstition, whether the total number or the number for either sex can be determined from the column heads. The per cent figure indicates the percentage which the associated number is of the total number (or sex according to column) answering that question. A dash indicates some fraction of one per cent.

The following superstitions were mentioned once in No. 3 by the men and not at all by the women:

Picture taken before ball game unlucky, chew gum while playing ball, funeral passing in front of player before football game, entering track meet in clean pants, missing baskets while warming up for basket-ball game, crossing guns or bats, receiving letter with stamp upside down, initials of name spelling a word, watched pot never boils, previous actions with fortunate outcome repeated, opposite for bad outcome, sitting in same seat for examination, wearing bow tie in examination, getting Monday lessons on Saturday prevents being called on, putting on left shoe first, shuffling odd number of times, clumsy shuffle, turning back when leaving house, number nine, right eye twitching lucky, left eye unlucky, itching right ear lucky, left ear unlucky, meeting funeral, crossing through funeral procession, working on Easter unlucky, walking before a gun, returning for forgotten article without sitting down, stealing bottle of milk from same house twice, stepping on side walk cracks, appearance of certain local advertisement, bragging about good fortune, fish bite better in dark of moon, fate, ghosts, certain Catholic church practices, belief in immortality.

The following were mentioned once in No 3 by the women and not at all by the men:

Accidents coming in threes, crossing snake track, crossing a line, ears ringing signifying some one thinking of you, same for hiccough, crowing of rooster in doorway—company coming, cat washing face in house brings company, living in neighborhood of recent deaths, odor of flowers that accompany death, wearing green garment followed by mourning, counting carriages in funeral, birthday cake superstitions, symbols in wedding cake, wearing another's engagement ring, whatever thought about very hard comes to pass, thinking hard of three good things brings them to pass, alternation of good and bad luck, called on if lesson not prepared, meanness returned in double dose, killing spider, turning chair on one leg, twist

SUPERSTITIONS MENTIONED IN No. 4 AS FORMERLY BELIEVED OR
PRACTICED

	Total		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Four leaf clover.....	98	25	35	20	63	28
Knocking on wood.....	57	14	20	12	37	16
Number 13.....	57	14	24	14	33	14
Opening umbrella in house.....	52	13	12	7	40	18
Fortune telling (cards, tea-cup, palm).....	49	12	14	8	35	15
Friday or Friday the 13th.....	49	12	22	13	27	11
Dreams, prophetic.....	39	10	11	6	28	12
Black cats.....	39	10	25	15	14	6
Sleeping on wedding cake.....	31	8	1	..	30	10
Picking up pins.....	29	7	7	4	22	13
Wishing on stars.....	25	6	4	2	21	9
Luck in white horses.....	25	6	9	5	16	7
Breaking mirror.....	21	5	9	5	12	5
Ghosts and fairies.....	18	5	9	5	9	4
Walking under ladder.....	16	4	6	4	10	5
Post coming between two walking.....	14	4	2	1	12	5
Hoodoos, jinxes and charms.....	14	4	9	5	5	2
Horseshoe.....	13	3	9	5	4	2
Break ng wish bone.....	11	3	1	..	10	5
Santa Claus.....	10	3	7	4	3	1
Moon over shoulder, through trees, etc.....	10	3	7	4	3	1
Garment on wrong side out.....	9	2	1	..	8	4
Wishing on load of hay.....	8	2	0	0	8	4
Sing before breakfast cry before night.....	8	2	0	0	8	4
Wish upon simultaneous remark.....	6	1	0	0	6	3
Weather signs (ground hog, etc.).....	6	1	2	1	4	2
Dog howling at night death sign.....	6	1	2	1	4	2
Wish while walking new walk or bridge.....	5	1	0	0	5	2
Bird entering house—death or bad luck.....	4	1	0	0	4	2
Stepping on cracks.....	4	1	0	0	4	2
Killing bugs, spiders, toads, etc.....	4	1	1	..	3	1
Removing warts.....	4	1	1	..	3	1
Five leaf clover unlucky.....	3	..	0	0	3	1
Opal lucky or unlucky.....	3	..	0	0	3	1
Knife cuts friendship.....	3	..	1	..	2	1
Carrying implement through house.....	3	..	1	..	2	1
Third smoke lighted from same match.....	3	..	3	2	0	0
Counting daisy petals.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Standing on crossing when team passes.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Sleep on tooth find penny in morning.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Charms in wedding cake.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Enter house front never leave by back.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Four people shaking hands crossed.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Walking seven rail connections on railroad.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Drowning cat.....	2	..	2	1	0	0
Crossing snake's path.....	2	..	2	1	0	0
Premonitions.....	2	..	2	1	0	0
Counting vehicles in funeral.....	2	..	1	..	1	..
Counting buttons.....	2	..	1	..	1	..
Ears burn someone talking of you.....	2	..	1	..	1	..
Phrenology.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Events occurring in threes.....	2	..	0	0	2	1
Number 3.....	2	..	1	..	1	..
Not definitely stated.....	1	..	1	..	0	0

towel when wiping with another, befriending black cat, poor rehearsal—good performance, going back after stumbling, in and out of same side of bed, holding gold pieces to full moon, rabbit crossing path on Friday, Santa Claus, wishing by new moon, crossing street at same time a team does, counting white horses, washing face in dew on May 1st to remove freckles, counting ten when obliged to return after starting.

The following superstitions were mentioned once in No. 4 by the men and not at all by the women:

Seventh inning lucky, crossed bats, picture taken before game, spit on hand and slap with finger direction of splash indicating direction of lost ball, shaving before game unlucky, never change broken shoe strings on day of game, win first hand at poker, some supposed facts of religion, prayer and God, power of saints to recover lost articles, transmigration of soul, walking five steps for wish to come true, dropping spoon, left foot first in ascending stairs, multiples of four lucky, lucky if dog barks before sixteen is counted, two steps going up stairs and one at a time going down, snake not die until sun down, turning a chair on one leg unlucky, going in and out of the house without sitting down, ship wrecked because sailors saw preacher just before sailing, luck in certain articles of clothing, crawl through window never grow up.

The following superstitions were mentioned once in No. 4 by the women and not at all by the men:

Bugaboo man, shutting open gates along the walk, stepping on cracks in cement walk, walking certain number of ties on railroad track, touch every tree passed or step on every square of side walk or be stabbed some day, counting side walk boards, counting black horses, skip certain boards in side walk, returning to house for something forgotten unlucky, expect company when visitor leaves by front door, stubbing toe, stand on side walk crack breaks mother's back, going from front of house to back leaving all doors open, sit down to prevent bad luck from returning to house for forgotten item, having a man first to enter house in the new year, turning back is bad luck, finding match and looking up person who dropped it, owl hooting near house indicating death in family, married on a rainy day, turning rings, wishing on rings, never pull ring off another's finger, accuracy in throwing rocks at trees of significance, planting money for money tree, spilling salt, wishing on first plum pudding of the year, putting salt on tooth

before burning it, never put shoes on the bed, afraid of devil if laughed in church, picking up newspapers upside down, warts from toads, crossing street in front of single horse, neglect of prayers deprives of some pleasure next day, meeting on the stairs, unlucky days, rocking an empty chair, comets and end of world, finding hairpin make new friend, if drop umbrella have some one else pick it up, hanging wish bone over door, dropping knives and forks, counting apple seeds, luck from left hind foot of rabbit, shooting star, spider on web—go up—wish comes true (and the reverse), naming apples, pictures hanging crooked means death coming, peacock feathers in house unlucky, bouquet thrown by bride, spider on one's person brings a letter, washing face in dew, burying rose leaves, right eye itching lucky—left eye unlucky.

At least two sex differences are indicated by the foregoing tabulations of superstitions. One is that the women mention more superstitions on the average per individual than do the men. This is made more obvious by the following summary. For this summary it will be noted that the number giving indefinite answers has been subtracted from the total number giving affirmative answers elsewhere indicated.

TOTAL NUMBER OF MENTIONS OF SUPERSTITIONS AND THE AVERAGE PER INDIVIDUAL

Question No. 3

	Male	Female	Total
Number of mentions of superstitions....	202	509	711
Individuals giving definite answers.	99	189	288
Average per individual.....	2.04	2.69	2.47

Question No. 4

	Male	Female	Total
Number of mentions of superstitions....	288	576	864
Individuals giving definite answers.	170	228	398
Average per individual.....	1.69	2.53	2.17

The difference between the sexes, although not large, is clearly indicated. The much larger difference in the report of former superstitions (No. 4) might be taken to indicate a still greater superstitiousness of girls in early adolescence than of boys, or it might point merely to what has often been asserted that women remember their childhood and youth experiences better than do men. Its meaning cannot be certain from this study.

The other sex difference is to be discovered by reading over the list of those superstitions peculiar to one sex and with it

those superstitions in which that sex predominates. Compare the lists given above of the superstitions mentioned once by one sex and not at all by the other. Continue the comparison by contrasting the following lists of superstitions mentioned twice or more by one sex and not at all by the other.

Superstitions mentioned twice or more by the men and not at all by the women.

No. 3

Fear of cemetery after dark, third smoke lighted from same match, flipping coin for decision, toe stubbed unlucky, number 23, good beginning—bad ending, lending to player in same poker game, moon phase affecting vegetable growth.

No. 4

Third smoke lighted from same match, drowning cat, crossing snake path, premonitions.

Superstition mentioned twice or more by the women and not at all by the men.

No. 3

Wedding cake, breaking wish bone, wishing on stars, wishing on load of hay, five leaf clover bad luck, spilling salt cause of quarrel, dog howling at night death sign, opals lucky or unlucky, removing ring breaks another's friendship, knife cuts friendship, bird entering house—death in family.

No. 4

Wishing on load of hay, sing before breakfast cry before night, wish upon simultaneous remark, wish while walking new walk or bridge, bird entering house death or bad luck, stepping on cracks, five leaf clover unlucky, opal lucky or unlucky, counting daisy petals, standing on crossing while team passes, sleep on tooth find penny in morning, charms in wedding cake, enter house front never leave by back, four people shaking hands crossed, walking seven rail connections on railroad, phrenology, events occurring in threes.

Then compare those superstitions frequently mentioned by one sex or the other, or by both, where there is considerable excess of frequency for one sex over the other. The following lists mention those superstitions reported by both sexes for which the percent of one sex mentioning them is greater than the per cent of the other sex by five or more.

Where percentage for one sex exceeds the other by five or more (Nos. 3 and 4 combined):

Male greater
Number 13, walking under a ladder, black cats.
Female greater

Knocking on wood, four leaf clover, dreams prophetic, opening umbrella in house, fortune telling, picking up pins, sleeping on wedding cake, wishing on stars, luck in white horses, breaking wish bone.

These compilations present a very good, and what seems to the writer a very clear, picture of how the sexes vary from each other in their superstitions. The superstitions of the women are much more concerned with the home, company, social relations, wishes, love, marriage and death; while those of the men are concerned chiefly with sports and success in the business activities of life. The superstitions of the women concern far more the feelings, emotions and desires; they are more subjective than the men, more deeply personal.

Perhaps such a consideration of differences is not quite permissible without a search for similarities. The following lists present the outstanding similarities between the superstitions of the sexes:

Superstitions reported by five per cent or more of both sexes. (Nos. 3 and 4 combined).

Number 13, knocking on wood, black cats, walking under a ladder, dreams prophetic, post coming between two walking, four leaf clover, opening umbrella in house, fortune telling, picking up pins, Friday or Friday the 13th, luck in white horses, breaking mirror.

Superstitions reported by one per cent or more of both sexes and with a difference between the percentages of less than five. (Nos. 3 and 4 combined).

Black cats, post coming between two walking, Friday or Friday the 13th, moon over shoulder, premonitions, hoodoos—jinxes—charms, number 3, carrying implement through house, knocking on wood, number 13, breaking mirror, ghosts and fairies, walking under ladder, horseshoe, Santa Claus, moon over shoulder, weather signs, dog howling at night as death sign.

Duplications here with the report of differences of five per cent or more in the table above are explained by the consolidation of the answers to questions three and four. These lists of superstitions reported by both sexes do not seem to the writer in any degree to controvert the conclusions reached concerning the sex differences. These are in most instances sufficiently general in nature to appeal to the peculiarities of both sexes.

It may be wiser not to attempt any conclusion from this study concerning the relative frequency of the different particular superstitions because of the possibility of vitiation by suggestion from the introduction to the questionnaire. The two tables above present the superstitions reported in the order of frequency of their report. Ten of the first twelve in each table are identical and indicate probably the most common superstitions. They are about what one would expect to head the list, although the great fearsomeness of black cats may be a little surprising. Four of the first twelve were not mentioned in the introduction to the questionnaire and so their frequency could not be attributed to suggestion. The order of frequency for the two sexes is not the same, but the difference does not appear to be significant. It is of interest to note also that the order conforms closely to the order obtained by Dresslar where there could be no possibility of suggestion.

Very little can be safely concluded from a comparison of the two general lists of superstitions reported because of the unknown factors conditioning the ability to recall the former superstitions and because there is nothing to indicate when the superstitions in the "former" and "present" lists were acquired by the individuals reporting. It might be said, if it were not too obvious, that those which head both lists are doubtless the most persistent superstitions. There is very little difference between the lists in the percentages for each of the superstitions with three exceptions. Belief in dreams as being prophetic is reported by twice as great a percentage and knocking on wood by more than twice as great a percentage of all reports of present superstitions as of reports of former superstitions. Friday and Friday the 13th has a balance in the other direction. It is reported by 12% as formerly believed or practiced and by 7% as believed or practiced at present.

Working over these reports of superstitions leaves one deeply impressed by that variability of form already mentioned. Only a few seem well fixed and they are to be found at the head of the tables of frequency. The majority are blessed with many variations. What is lucky for one person is unlucky for another; the exact significance of superstitiously significant events is rarely certain; and new superstitions appear with little provocation. The poker game superstition reported above had its origin shortly before this study was begun and was observed by one of the writer's advanced students. Others in the list bear evidence of recent birth. As the same variability is manifest in Dresslar's lists, it would

seem as if human nature bore in itself a predisposition to be superstitious which found expression in forms controlled by the chance of circumstance.

Confusion can occasionally be detected with the developing consciousness of right and wrong. Apparently things forbidden to the child, when it does not grasp the reason why, not infrequently acquire in the child's mind a mystic meaning and are conceived to be the cause of most fanciful effects. It is as though the child tried thus to explain what had been made unintelligible to him by his elders. An especially good example of this is to be found in the superstition reported by the man who as a boy believed that if he should crawl through a window he would never grow up. This again indicates the ease with which superstition takes form and how it is conditioned by circumstance.

It was thought wise to ask in the questionnaire for each person's explanation of his or her own belief or practice of superstition. Not with any thought of course that a census of opinions would explain their own superstitiousness; but with the idea that a consolidation of their explanations might be of assistance in making a general interpretation. There was also the hope that the question might stimulate reminiscence and draw out comment which might be of value. The answers have been grouped according to their most conspicuous characteristics under a series of headings which are self-explanatory. The answers themselves are given in the students' own words so far as possible and where not possible in an abbreviation which adequately expresses the meaning. It was answered by 184 males and 247 females or a total of 431. This is 94% of all those who reported some experience of superstitions. The number of males answering is 94% of all males having had experience of superstition and the same figure holds also for the females. The males answering constitute 69% of all males answering the questionnaire; the females 85% of all females answering and the total number of answers is 77% of the entire group studied. As in the other tables the number of people giving each answer is indicated opposite that answer with the per cent which that is of that group, except where the per cent is a small fraction.

That eighty-one of these young people (19%) seriously state that their belief is due to a few apparently verifying experiences, often only one, is additional evidence that one of Bacon's idols of the tribe is still in a fair state of preservation. The remarks appended to their papers reinforce this manifestation of willingness to generalize from a few affirma-

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SUMMARY OF EXPLANATIONS OFFERED

(Answers to Question 6)

	Female	Male	Female	Male	Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
From verifying experiences.....	45	18	36	20	81	19
From parents or elders;—						
Elders in general.....	39	21				
Parents specifically mentioned....	17	16				
Total.....	56	23	37	20	93	22
Social suggestion;—						
Practice but not believe, violate if						
necessary.....	..	1				
For fun, joke, no belief.....	30	8				
Imitation.....	..	9				
From negroes (2 say servants)....	3	..				
Courtesy.....	1	..				
Because associates do.....	94	47				
Custom.....	..	4				
Taught by others.....	..	5				
Total.....	128	52	74	40	202	47
Social inheritance;—						
Matter of course, no reason.....	..	1				
Growth of habit.....	13	4				
Tradition without belief.....	3	3				
Childish credulity.....	9	15				
Ignorance or thoughtlessness....	1	4				
Never reasoned.....	12	..				
Total.....	38	15	27	15	65	15
Feeling or emotion involved;—						
Instinctive fear.....	10	1				
Feeling impels against reason....	..	10				
Encouraged belief because of						
joy in.....	6	1				
Best to play safe.....	7	7				
Unconquerable influence.....	..	1				
Frightened by supposed ghosts....	2	..				
Curious to see what would happen	3	..				
Add to mystery and romance of						
life.....	3	..				
To entertain my childish mind...	1	..				
Hope for indication of satisfac-						
tion of wishes.....	3	..				
Afraid not to conform.....	4	..				
Lack of will power.....	1	..				
No belief but feels queer if does not						
follow.....	1	..				
Frightened by a cat.....	1	..				
Natural attraction of supernatural	1	..				
Intuition.....	1	..				
Total.....	44	18	20	11	64	15

SUMMARY OF EXPLANATIONS OFFERED—Continued
(Answers to Question 6)

	Female	Male	Female No. %	Male No. %	Total No. %
Literature;—					
Almanacs.....	..	1			
Cheap novels and newspapers....	..	4			
Books and stories.....	6	1			
Books on occult.....	3	..			
Total.....		9	4	6	3
Philosophy;—					
Because of express theory.....	..	1			
Biblical authority for.....	1	..			
Because astrology and palmistry are based on facts.....	1	..			
Total.....		2	0.8	1 0.5	3 ..
Don't know.....		1	0.4	11 6	12 3
Unintelligible answers.....		7	3	4 2	11 3
Miscellaneous (Misunderstood parental warning).....		..	..	1 0.5	1 ..

tive cases. Some are probably worthy of record as illustrations of the rest and they follow:

"Only accidents ever had (two in number) followed a black cat crossing path."

"Every one who has had locker thirteen in the gym has been crippled up including myself."

"I knew personally an old man who said one morning on arising, 'Last night I dreamed I was riding on a black horse and I am going to die.' The next morning he was found dead in bed."

"I have a habit of reading a chapter of the New Testament in the morning. When I fail to do so it seems that I do not have good luck for that day."

Another insists that certain fortune tellers have told what subsequently happened and therefore he believes. Still another relates that she continues out of gratitude for one successful wish on hay. In contrast to this it is pleasant to report that there is manifest some effect of education and the development of reasoning ability. One reports that training in correct thinking banished his superstitions. Three men say that the development of reason dispelled the superstitions. Another attributes his change of belief and practice both to the development of reason and to scientific study. Two more think that only positive cases are commonly noticed and three mention disillusioning experiences which banished their superstitions.

The remarks made also amplify and emphasize the belief of the majority of the group studied that their superstitions came from their human contacts. Consolidating from the above table it will be found that 84% of the answers attribute their superstitions to their parents and elders or other social contacts. One young lady reports that her mother used superstitions to frighten her into good behavior and many mention their being taught superstitions by parents. Grandparents, too, are often mentioned. But many of those who lacked superstitions made remarks and attribute their lack to their parents. Nine of these mention parental ridicule of superstitions or careful warning against. Some of the comments indicate also that some children react in a negative manner to a superstitious environment. Such remarks as "steeped in superstition to the point of disgust," "terrify parents by defying their superstitions," and "parents superstitious but writer always skeptical and could not understand why parents believed" appear and express the attitude occasionally taken.

There is frequent mention in the remarks of an emotion variously described which is aroused by superstitious circumstances and refuses to be conquered by reason or will. Many of the forms of expression of this appear in the table above. That a number express pleasure derived from superstitious practices is perhaps nothing more than an interesting variation. The majority, however, treat them as troublesome and many are the expressions of efforts to conquer.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Superstitious belief or practice was admitted by 53% of the group studied, by 40% of the males and 66% of the females.

61% of those denying any superstition at time of writing admit having formerly believed or practiced them.

The total number of those having had experience of superstition at some time was 82% of the group studied, 73% of the males reported such experience and 90% of the females.

Males apparently outgrow superstition more easily than females.

One half assign their former superstitions to the years from 12 to 16.

The form of the majority of superstitions is not fixed but varies from one group of individuals to another.

Women mention slightly more superstitions on the average per individual than do men.

The superstitions of the women are concerned chiefly with domestic and social affairs and the intimately personal; while

those of the men are concerned with sports and the business activity of life.

New superstitions are easily created.

Verifying experience is given as the reason for their superstition by 19%.

To parents, elders and other social contacts 84% attribute their superstitions, 22% to parents and elders, 47% to social suggestion and 15% to social inheritance.

Emotions and feelings beyond the control of reason are mentioned as the cause by 15%.

There is ample evidence, for this group at least, that the superstitiousness is not entirely due to contact with superstitious people. The persistence of superstition in spite of education and the development of reason, the prevalence of superstition, the variability of superstition forms, the slight coincidences or trifling events which give rise to new superstitions, the readiness with which incidents are accepted as proof, and the evidence of strange feelings and emotions which impel in spite of reason,—all point to a predisposition to such emotional reactions to the events of life as are conducive to belief in mystic interpretations. If it can be considered as established that women are more generic than men, then the consistently larger figures found in this study for the women would support this conclusion.

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